

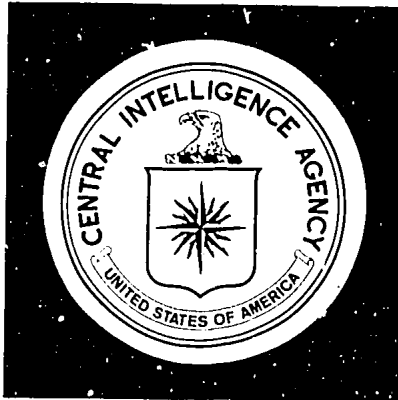
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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*Japan: The Communist Party Comes of Age*

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**APAN****communist party comes of age****SECRET**



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Spectacular gains by the Japan Communist Party in the Diet election last December provided a splash of color in a political rite that was otherwise gray and predictable. When the Diet recessed before the election, the Communist Party was the smallest of the five national parties; when the Diet convened in January, the party was the third largest. The Communists nearly tripled the size of their delegation in the Diet's powerful House of Representatives, from 14 to 39 seats, and won more than 10 percent of the popular vote.

This election success, together with the party's ranking as the biggest non-ruling communist party outside Western Europe, is the fruit of a decade-long campaign to mold the party in a moderate image with mass appeal. Nevertheless,

many Japanese distrust the Communists and only voted for the party in December to show their dissatisfaction with the ruling Liberal Democrats.

The newly confident Communists now command more attention in Diet proceedings, and their presence on the strategic House Steering Committee makes it more difficult for the ruling conservatives to pass key legislation. Barring a loss of voter support through irresponsible behavior, the Communists will probably register additional, but more modest, gains in future Diet elections. They pose no immediate threat to the hegemony of the Liberal Democrats in the Lower House, but could contribute to the loss of the conservative majority in the Diet's Upper House in 1974.

(from left)

**Leaders of the Japan Communist Party**

Secretary-General Tetsuzo Fuwa, Central Committee Chairman Sanzo Nosaka, Presidium Chairman Kenji Miyamoto



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### Turbulent Beginnings

Marxism first aroused the interest of Japanese intellectuals in the late 19th century, but a communist party was not formally established until the end of World War I, and then it was only a covert organization under the direction of Moscow. In the period up to World War II, the party was ruthlessly suppressed. Its leaders were in jail or exile, and factionalism was endemic as the party faithful were preoccupied with doctrinal wrangling. Moreover, the party's subordination to the Comintern and its demands that the emperor must go alienated it from rising Japanese nationalism.

The party was legalized by the occupation authorities in 1945. In the political freedom of postwar Japan, the Communists blossomed. In 1946, Sanzo Nosaka, a pre-war party leader, returned from exile in China and broke with party usage to call for reliance upon parliamentary democracy. He went so far as to support retention of the emperor if this was the wish of the people. Many of the civil rights, labor, and administrative reforms that Nosaka joined in advocating were implemented during the occupation. This moderate approach, which sought to win broad popular support, paid dividends; the party came to be called "the lovable Japanese communists."

In the 1949 general election, the party won 10 percent of the popular vote and 35 seats in the House of Representatives. A year later, party membership, which had never gone over a thousand persons in the prewar period, reached 150,000. This honeymoon as a party of mass appeal was not without its pitfalls, however, and it was short lived. In January 1950, the Cominform denounced the Japanese Communists for their advocacy of a peaceful transition to socialism and their view of the US occupation as a progressive move.

Nosaka promptly bowed to Moscow's censure and issued a self-criticism, while the party fired new verbal blasts against US policy. Scattered incidents of violence led to the jailing of communist leaders, and the party reverted once

#### CHRONOLOGY OF THE JAPAN COMMUNIST PARTY

1922	Party founded by small band of intellectuals.
1922-45	Years of illegal existence and control of the party by the Soviet Comintern; repression increased in the late 1930s, forcing leaders into jail, underground, and into exile in China.
1945	Occupation political reforms legalize the Communist Party and release its leaders from detention.
1946	Sanzo Nosaka returns from China and begins to create the image of the "lovable Communist party."
1949	The party wins 35 seats in the House of Representatives.
1950	Denounced by the Comintern for seeking a peaceful transition to socialism, the party turns to revolutionary tactics and its leaders go underground and into exile.
1950-55	Period of strong influence by Peking.
1952	Negative public reaction to the party's revolutionary image causes the loss of all 35 Lower House seats.
1955	Party leaders begin to moderate the image of the party—a movement accelerated under the leadership of Kenji Miyamoto.
1964	Relations with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are broken and Soviet sympathizers, led by Yoshio Shiga, are expelled from the party.
1966	Relations with the Chinese Communist Party deteriorate and the JCP suffers continuing abuse from Peking.
1969	JCP strength in Lower House increases from 6 to 14 seats.
1971	Miyamoto visits Moscow, Hanoi, Rome, and Bucharest to improve relations and reaffirm party's independence.
1972	Winning more than 10 percent of the popular vote, the party takes 39 seats in the 491-member House of Representatives.

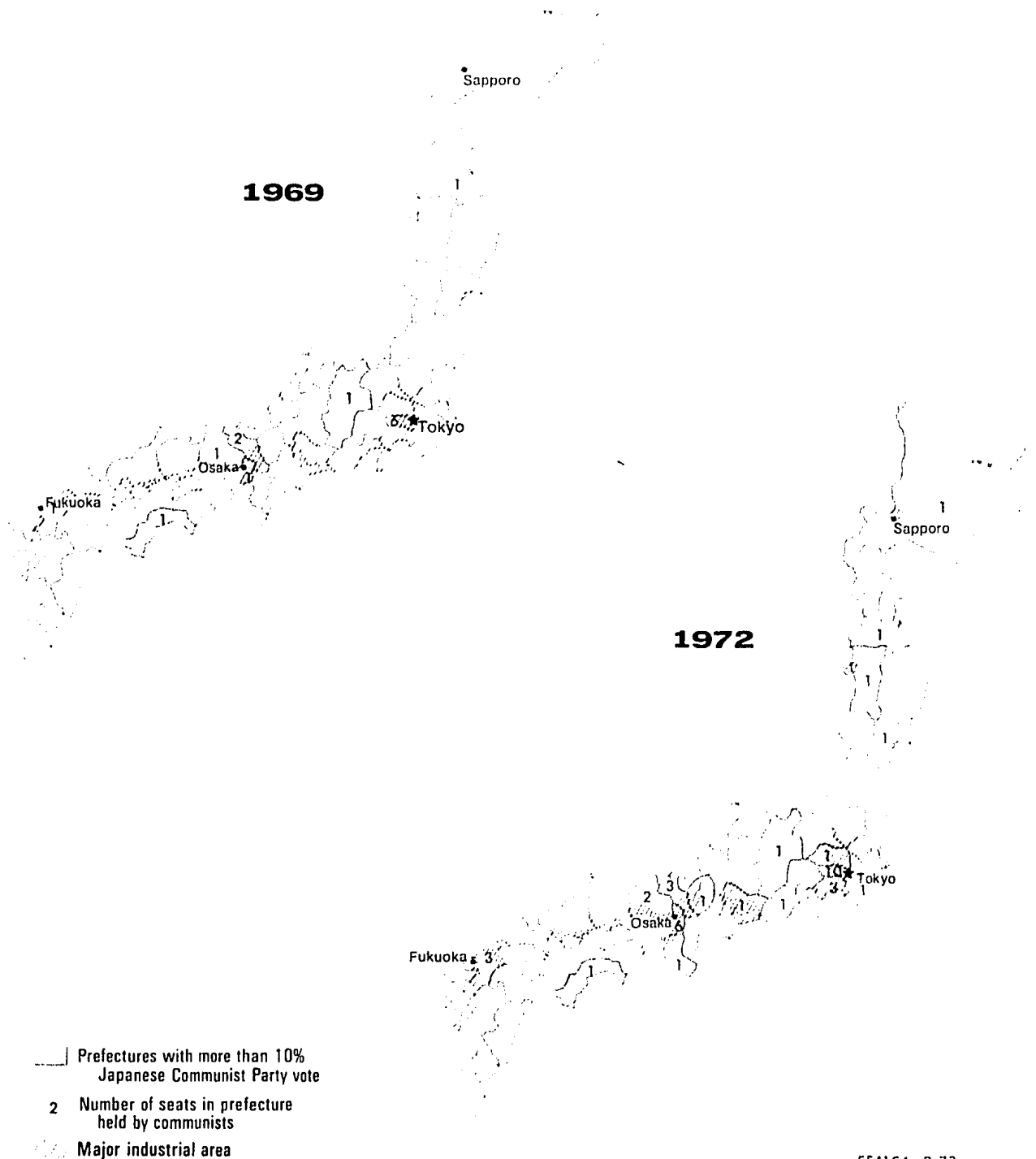
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# **Japan: Gains in Communist Party Strength**



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again to a covert status. Popular support dropped precipitously as the party became a symbol of extremism, and in the 1952 election, it lost all of its Diet seats. By the end of the decade, the Communists acknowledged the failure of militancy and began to turn the party once again in a more moderate direction.

#### Success of the Miyamoto Line

Reorientation of the party was a slow process that only gained momentum in the mid-1960s under the leadership of Kenji Miyamoto, a literary critic and party ideologue who became chairman of the party presidium in 1970. He called for a two-stage revolution in which Japan would first rid itself of American "imperialism"—that is, the security arrangements with the US—and then build a socialist state—nationalizing key industries. All of this was to be accomplished at the polls. Miyamoto systematically changed party practice to eliminate the taint of violence and opened to the press and public all meetings of the party congress save those related to finance and personnel. Today, party influence is pronounced in many youth federations, particularly the Zengakuren university groups, but the party is a bitter enemy of the violence-prone "New Left." The Communists are caustic in their denunciations of the terrorism of the Red Army Faction and the United Red Army, and they have promoted peaceful activities among the young left. In contrast to the Socialists, the Communists did not suffer at the polls from public identification of their party with the excesses of student protest action in the late 1960s.

Independence from foreign communist party influence has reinforced the moderate image of the Japanese Communists, and has enabled them to exploit nationalistic sentiments in Japan. The Japanese Communists took advantage of the deepening Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s to loosen ties with both Moscow and Peking. The Indonesian Communist Party's debacle in 1965 was final proof to the Japanese Communists that they should go their own way. Now, after decades of seesawing between subservience to the Soviets or the Chinese, the Japanese party is vigorously critical of both.

#### Amassing Support at the Polls

The more nationalistic the Communists have become, the more success they have had at the polls. Working from a base of three seats in the House of Representatives in 1960, the party increased its holdings slightly in both 1963 and 1969. They now have a still modest 39 seats in the 491-member Lower House. In the same period, the party has progressed from one to ten members in the House of Councilors. The Communists are, moreover, partners in over 100 reformist local governments and are the third-ranking party, over-all, in local assembly seats.

Paralleling these gains, membership has grown to 300,000. These members are well-disciplined, giving the Communist Party organizational strength far superior to that of the Socialists and Liberal Democrats, who command broader support. Modest but steady growth is also occurring in the percentage of the electorate that identifies the Communists as its preferred party. Newspaper polls showed 3.6 percent of those polled chose the party on the eve of the 1972 elections, an increase from the respective 1969 and 1967 levels of 2.4 and 1.5 percent.

Communist candidates standing for national office are a new breed. They shun ideology in favor of bread-and-butter issues. A large proportion of these office seekers are articulate

#### Japan Communist Party Results in House of Representative Elections Since 1960

	Percent of Popular Vote	Number of Seats Won
1960	2.9	3
1963	4.0	5
1967	4.8	5
1969	6.8	14
1972	10.5	39

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physicians, lawyers, and educators—models of respectability. They speak out on social and environmental problems and promote a party platform that calls for greater attention to the problems of the common people and less for those of big business. They favor abrogation of US-Japanese security arrangements.

The Communists can afford massive public relations campaigns, and this has boosted their fortunes at the polls. Donations from small businesses, the collection of membership fees, and the sale of a party paper whose Sunday circulation approaches 2 million copies, give the Communists working funds well beyond those of the other opposition parties. Additionally, the party makes excellent use of its affiliated doctors and lawyers in the search for votes. Its Diet members, famous for their responsiveness to constituent needs, can call upon these professionals to provide free services. Although the Socialists and Democratic Socialists have general control of Japan's two largest labor federations, the Communist Party has infiltrated a number of important unions to the point where these assets can be mobilized at election time.

In putting together their victory last December, the Communists drew heavily upon Japan's "floating vote," a growing body of citizens—particularly youth and urban workers—alienated by the inertia of the other political parties. The Communists were unable to make any significant inroads in the largely conservative agricultural areas, but they did make gains in several mixed urban-rural areas. These were mainly districts slated for industrial development under Prime Minister Tanaka's plans for "remodeling the archipelago"; in these areas, voters reacted against Tanaka's plans, largely out of fear of heavy pollution coming with new industry.

The failure of the middle-of-the-road Komeito, Socialist, and Democratic Socialists parties to provide a viable alternative to the ruling party has enhanced the appeal of the outspoken Communists. Still, much of the Japanese electorate suspects Communist motives. Many voters used the party only to express their mounting



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dissatisfaction with inflation, inadequate welfare programs, and worsening environmental conditions. Despite the size of the Communist protest vote, many Japanese also recognized that only the ruling party, which has an overwhelming majority in the Lower House, can get things done. As a result, most Communist gains were made at the expense of the moderate Komeito and Democratic Socialists, and, in a few districts, the Communists and Liberal Democrats both increased their Diet strength.

#### A New Role in the Diet

Even though the Communists control fewer than 10 percent of the Lower House members, the party's stronger position is subtly altering the way politics is practiced in the Diet. The party is commanding more attention from the media and other political parties, and having topped 21 seats, the party is entitled to introduce non-budgetary legislation and to sit on the directorate of the House Steering Committee.

In the past, the Liberal Democrats have relied upon closed-door sessions of the Steering Committee to work out necessary compromises with the opposition parties and to smooth the passage of legislation. The Communists roundly condemn such practices, arguing that government business should be transacted in a "fish bowl." Their demand for open committee meetings is already inhibiting the Komeito and Socialists from engaging in back-room compromise, and the Liberal Democrats are finding it more difficult and time-consuming, although not impossible, to shepherd controversial bills through the Diet. As a result, the ruling party may be forced to rely more upon the clout of its majority to manage Diet business. Governing by force of numbers is considered unfair by the Japanese, and if the Liberal Democrats make frequent use of so-called forced votes, without the participation of all parties, they will get bruising criticism from the media and opposition parties.

Communist Party willingness to levy personal attacks on Prime Minister Tanaka and to delve into the financial dealings that have long

oiled the Japanese political system could prove an additional embarrassment for the government. During the past several months, the party has waged a quite nasty campaign against Tanaka's financial dealings, and the party may well try to arouse greater public criticism of the ingrained spoils system.

Ironically, at the same time that the Communists are helping to make life more difficult for the ruling party and to crystallize voter protest, their increased strength is making progress toward a unification of the opposition more difficult. The party's relations with the Komeito, Socialists, and Democratic Socialists have deteriorated steadily since last December. The Socialists, in particular, feel that the growing appeal of the Japan Communist Party threatens their status as the most influential opposition party and their control of the country's largest labor federation, Sohyo. Friction between the two parties has been most evident in sessions of the Diet's Steering Committee, where the Communists charge that the Socialists collude with Liberal Democrats. In turn, Socialist leaders bitterly accuse the Communists of engaging in a campaign of lies to block the formation of a united front that could push the conservatives out of office. Although the two parties have long sparred in this way, their dispute is becoming so emotional that it may be difficult to change course.

In the short run, this feuding is causing some Japanese to regard the Communist Party as politically immature. Voters who had looked to the party to vitalize united opposition to the government have been disappointed. Already, the Liberal Democrats have benefited from this disunity with the election of conservative candidates in several local contests that might otherwise have gone to the opposition. One Tokyo lawyer, in a letter to a major Japanese newspaper in early February, may have spoken for many citizens when he warned that popular disdain for opposition party bickering could cut back, rather than increase, the seats of the Communists and Socialists in the next Diet election.



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*"Big city dwellers voted for the Socialists and Communists to air their resentment of Liberal Democratic policies that ignore urban problems in favor of big business..."*

*"Now, however, the squabbling of the two parties is benefiting the conservatives in local elections and creating a deplorable situation in the Diet..."*

*"If this continues, far from increasing the seats of the Socialists and Communists in the next election, popular disdain may well cut them back."*

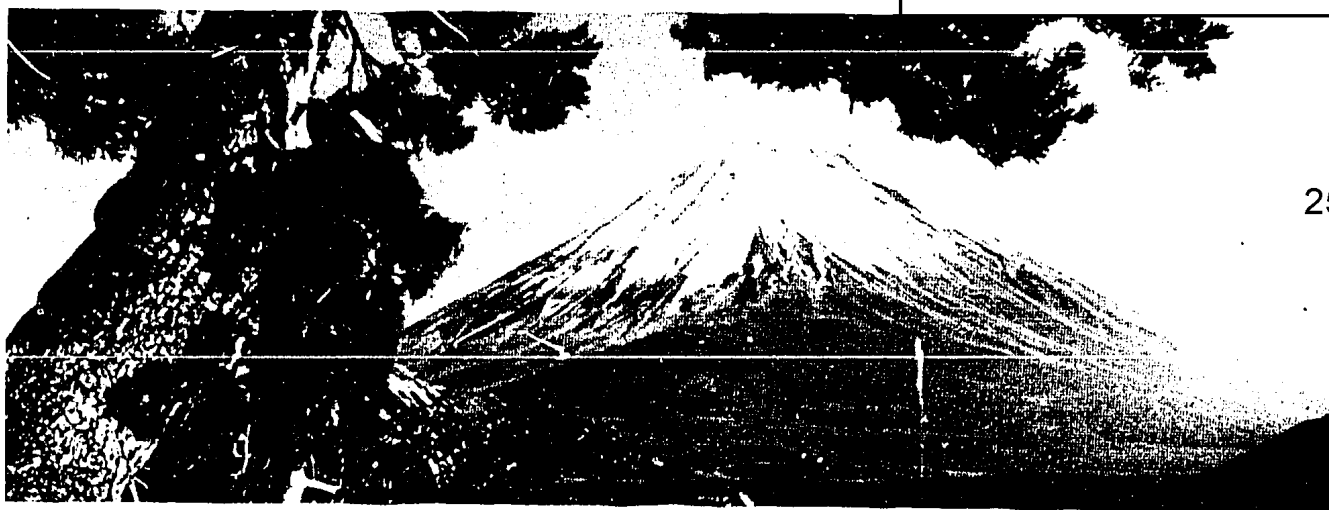
(Letter to the Editor/*Asahi Shimbun*/ 4 February 1973)

#### Impact of Future Communist Gains

If current Diet squabbles are short lived and the Communists manage to avoid alienating the electorate with their histrionics, both big ifs, their Diet strength should continue to grow, although the pace of future increases will probably be more modest than that of last December. The Communists are now striving to pick up additional seats from mixed urban-rural areas—having already won seats in nearly every district of their large city strongholds. Japan's multi-member, single-ballot election district system will make another round of spectacular growth difficult to achieve.

Although the Communists cannot increase their strength sufficiently in the near term to threaten the hegemony of the Liberal Democrats in the Lower House, much less bring the party to power, the Communists are likely to exert an influence on the Japanese political scene that goes well beyond their limited numerical strength in the Diet. Their December election gains, while not making any direct inroads on safe conservative seats, shook the Liberal Democrats since the gains highlighted the Japanese voter's dissatisfaction with the government's performance. Unless the Liberal Democrats respond with programs that alleviate urban ills and allay fears of industrial pollution spreading to rural areas, additional Communist gains could contribute to possible loss of a Liberal Democratic majority in the July 1974 elections for the Upper House of the Diet.

The Upper House is not as powerful as the Lower House; it can veto or stall legislation, and a two-thirds majority vote in the Lower House is needed to override such action. The Liberal Democrats do not have a two-thirds majority in the Lower House, and an end to their majority in the Upper House would complicate their control of the legislative process. In that event, the opposition parties are not apt to oppose conservative policies across-the-board, but the Liberal Democrats would be forced into significant ad hoc political compromises to get a voting majority in both chambers.



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